

The committee for Michael Jeffrey Roberson

Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

DEVIL'S HORSE

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

Donald Howard

Andrew Garrison

Mia Carter

DEVIL'S HORSE

by

Michael Jeffrey Roberson, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2015

Devil's Horse

by

Michael Jeffrey Roberson, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

SUPERVISOR: Donald Howard

This report summarizes the script development, pre-production, production, and post- production stages of making the short film *Devil's Horse*. The short was produced as my graduate thesis film in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at The University of Texas at Austin in partial fulfillment of my Master of Fine Arts degree in Film Production.

Table of Contents

PROLOGUE.....	1
CONCEPTION.....	2
PRE-PRODUCTION.....	8
PRODUCTION.....	11
POST-PRODUCTION.....	16
EPILOGUE.....	18
Appendix A: Original Script.....	20
Appendix B: Shotlist.....	35
Appendix C: Shooting Schedule.....	36
Appendix D: Cast and Crew Credits.....	37

PROLOGUE

If you marry, you will regret it; if you do not marry, you will also regret it; if you marry or do not marry, you will regret both; Laugh at the world's follies, you will regret it, weep over them, you will also regret that; laugh at the world's follies or weep over them, you will regret both; whether you laugh at the world's follies or weep over them, you will regret both. Believe a woman, you will regret it, believe her not, you will also regret that; believe a woman or believe her not, you will regret both; whether you believe a woman or believe her not, you will regret both. Hang yourself, you will regret it; do not hang yourself, and you will also regret that; hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret both; whether you hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret both. This, gentlemen, is the sum and substance of all philosophy.

— Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*

I wanted to make a detective film. I wanted murder. Intrigue. And I wanted to shoot it in my hometown of Mandeville, Louisiana. And I wanted non-actors. And gore. Lots of blood and gore. And Satan too. I wanted to call it *Satan's Brew*. That's how it began. And it swallowed itself whole and contorted itself and was reborn again and again before it stood on its own two feet as *Devil's Horse*. And now it's a film.

CONCEPTION

I was depressed. I couldn't shake it. There was no cause, really. It just started to form, like mold. It could've been graduate school. It hasn't been a very good three and a half years. I've lost my morale. I've sunken into myself, grown bitter and can only find the negative in everything. And then my best friend Brad called me.

"Hey man," he said.

"Hey what's up?"

"Lauren and I are getting a divorce," he said.

It hit me like a jab to the nose. We talked for a while, said goodbye, and I cried.

After my own divorce years earlier, I'd lost faith in love and monogamy. The bottom dropped out, and I couldn't rely on anything anymore. However, finding myself within inches of complete nihilism, I found things that restored my faith in life. I'd taken up running, I found love again, and the people closest to me — people like Brad — were

happy, in love and raising families. Life was beautiful again. There was hope after all.

But this? Of all people, Brad? I'd always considered myself an atheist, but deep down I still struggled with some higher entity with a hand on the knob of fate. That is, each time the bottom dropped out, I turned to the entity: "See? This again is *proof* you don't exist." Why Brad? If any human being deserves love and companionship, it's Brad. As irrational as it seems, I'd assumed there was an equilibrium woven into the fabric of existence. There had to be some sort of justice, right? Like karma, or something. Why not break up the marriages of those who deserve it? Brad didn't need this. In addition to the divorce, he was going through so many other trials, and this was the last thing he needed. He couldn't do this alone. He needed Lauren there to help him.

But no. It wouldn't be. His two wonderful children would have to now see their mother and father separated. It'll be Dad's house on the weekend for them. Brad will have to keep it together when one day a stranger becomes their step-father. Why Brad? His soul is so full, his heart so big, why him?

No answer. No logic. No rhyme, no reason. No cause, no effect. It just is.

This struggle had to be at the heart of my film. Films shouldn't be a practice in crafting satisfying narrative arcs. Rather, they should be a struggle for meaning. The pursuit of "how" and "why". How does a person make sense of life in the wake of trauma and loss? Why should a person continue living when the foundation crumbles away? Is there any point to existence? These are the big philosophical questions, and I wanted to explore them with my best friend. I didn't need tangible or reliable answers. I'd already learned that they would crumble away anyway. I just needed to explore, not knowing where it would take me.

I knew I wanted to shoot something in my hometown of Mandeville, Louisiana, just outside New Orleans. And having grown up with Brad, and knowing how gregarious he was, I asked him to star in the film. He said yes, of course he would. It was a gamble. He's not an actor. But I know him, and he's a born performer. You can see it in him. There's a

sparkle in his eye, something profound and human about him. It's beautiful. We've complemented each other since fourth grade. Brad was the born performer, a natural comedian, the flirt, the fearless schmooze. I was the shy sidekick, the nervous introvert, the kid too scared to ask a girl out. Yet, over the years, being around Brad brought out another side of me, helped me to branch out and explore the world. I could approach people without them biting me, make jokes without risk of injury or even ask a girl out and not go into cardiac arrest if she said no. I trusted Brad could bring the film to life, so we got to work on the script.

Because Brad was in New Orleans and I was in Austin, I created a Google Doc, and we spent months treating it like a shared journal. If we found ourselves drunk and weeping over a certain song, we'd share it and talk about why. If we were feeling particularly suicidal that day, we'd write about it. If we felt rejected, unwanted or scared, we'd explore it in the doc. It was amazing. From this, I started shaping a story.

I'd originally wanted to write a Louisiana noir-inspired detective story, maybe something with elements of horror. But, as I collaborated with Brad on the doc, the story began taking on a new direction. Brad's

character was no longer a detective but instead an everyman, like Brad himself. However, I needed a way into the darkness underneath, the hidden pain and overwhelming angst left in the wake of loss. And since we were revisiting our Louisiana roots, I turned to the local mythology and was reminded of the Rougarou.

The Rougarou, a thing of Louisiana legend, is a half-wolf-half-man creature from local folklore. My first encounter with the Rougarou was as a child visiting New Orleans' Audubon Zoo. To this day, there is a swamp exhibit with a "life-sized" Rougarou, a figure of dread and fascination for children. I'd made a short film back in 2010, titled *Rougarou*, about my parents. I'd used the Rougarou as a metaphor for my father's shyness. However, for *Devil's Horse*, I could use the Rougarou as a conduit for Brad's feelings of emptiness and hopelessness, that dark void rumbling down below, something just as much part of the local fabric as it was Brad's soul.

In my research I turned to many of the Existentialist thinkers for guidance. This proved to be helpful in orienting Brad's disposition after his divorce as it related to my own struggles. Steeped in intellectual

thought and emotional journaling, I needed one more element, something spiritual. I turned to the bible, where I read Ecclesiastes and the Book of Job, where I was able to start structuring a narrative around Brad's feelings and my philosophical research. Devil's Horse became a story about Brad hitting rock bottom but finding something beyond nihilism, an intangible sense of purpose.

PRE-PRODUCTION

As I wrote the script, I kept careful inventory of my resources in Louisiana. I wrote to these strengths. Locations, props and people were contingent on what I knew we could use during production. I contacted old friends in Louisiana and rounded out the cast, often tweaking the script to fit the personality of these people. I didn't want actors. I'm inspired by the work of directors like Bruno Dumont, whose use of non-professional actors lends a sense of authenticity and emotional realism. So, after casting Brad, I turned to family and friends.

I took frequent visits back to Mandeville where I'd visit places I'd remembered from childhood. I'd bring a camera and film anything that caught my eye. I'd hang out in the local bars, taking notes on this place I left so many years ago. I'd setup in local coffee shops, often near Lake Pontchartrain, where I'd write, hoping the essence of this place would wash over me. Maybe it did. Or not. It was difficult either way.

Back in Austin, I found my director of photography, Tom Rosenberg. A good friend, I knew we shared many of the same cinematic inspirations.

This kind of shorthand I knew would come in handy when shotlisting and shooting. I also reached out to my friend and producing partner Sophia Yu about producing the film. We had recently produced another thesis film together and I knew she was a talented, determined, driven and hard-working filmmaker. Since we'd be shooting in Louisiana but doing most of our planning here in Austin, I knew I needed someone who could keep things organized and proactively get things done. Sophia, Tom and I started meeting and planning out the details of the shoot.

As I continued working on the script, Sophia handled all the logistics of forms, cementing locations and reaching out to potential crew. We also began planning our crowdfunding campaign, which we scheduled to overlap with our shooting in July. It was an ambitious step, though it was a proven method. We launched the campaign in late June with a goal of covering all of our production costs. Once we solidified our small Austin-based crew (producer, director, DP, gaffer, production designer, sound, 1st AC, 2nd AC, AD and key grip), we starting mapping out the caravan over to Mandeville.

I took one last trip to Louisiana about one month before the shoot. I secured housing for the crew, hired a local make-up artist, held rehearsals with the cast and reached out to local businesses for donations, among other things. With everything in order, we checked out all of the equipment in Austin, filled a U-Haul and Sophia and I drove down to Mandeville. We spent a few days finishing pre-production through grocery shopping and planning crew meals, borrowing helpful items from family friends, holding another rehearsal, finalizing costume and familiarizing ourselves with the area. When the first wave of the crew arrived, we were ready to begin our first day of shooting.

PRODUCTION

The shoot was inspiring. We spent seven days shooting in the heat and humidity of southern Louisiana in July.

Day 1

No actual shooting was done on Day 1. We went to each location with the department heads and scouted.

Day 2

We started off with a simpler shoot day. With only half the crew at this point, we shot in my mother's hair salon, the local pub and my parent's home. The rest of the crew arrived from Austin in the evening. It was a relaxed day and no lines of dialogue were recorded.

Day 3

This shoot day was a bit more intense, all outside in the heat and humidity of Fontainebleau State Park. While contending with bugs and

the risk of poison ivy, we predominantly shot Brad trudging through the woods and eating a po-boy on the lakefront. Rob, our evil fisherman, drove in from Houma to check in about wardrobe and shoot a short scene of him fishing.

An old friend who had agreed to play our Rougarou on day 6 cancelled on me today. So, with a bit of help from Brad, we were able to cast another good friend, John, to drive in from New Orleans to play our Rougarou. This ended up being a fortuitous casting decision.

Day 4

This was the most difficult of shoot days. The day was long. We had actual dialogue to record. And our actors had to act. As non-professionals, this required a lot of maneuvering and acclimating, but we were able to pull it off, though we did have to simplify and cut a few shots from our schedule in order to wrap before nightfall.

The day was also difficult for Brad, who had to be thrown to the ground repeatedly, kicked and punched and was required to smoke cigarettes for almost all of his shots. His body and throat were

considerably sore by the end of the day. Additionally, he was juggling his day job, having to work at 5am in New Orleans each morning a few hours before his call time. We all relaxed with a dip in the pool afterward.

Day 5

Also a difficult day, today was focused on Brad's character after being jumped by the fisherman and his girlfriend. Our make-up artist covered Brad in blood and bruises, and most of the scenes were focused on Brad limping through the woods. One particular shot on the beach offered no shade and required difficult trudging through fiery sand. This seemed to sap all the energy from the crew. However, after an energizing lunch, we shot the final scene of the film with Brad and my good friend Chris on the picturesque shore of Lake Pontchartrain. It was a beautiful success, followed by a recap at a local pub.

Day 6

Our Rougarou day. My good friend John arrived as the last-minute casting replacement. John wore our cumbersome Rougarou mask and was

sufficiently covered in make-up, dirt and grime. We shot the scene on the road where Brad hots the Rougarou with his car. We next moved on to our forest clearing location where we shot various shots of the Rougarou traipsing through the woods.

Our final shot of the day proved to be our most ambitious. Setting up 48 feet of dolly track, we shot nine long takes of Brad walking through the clearing before being devoured by the Rougarou. The final part of the shot required a well-time crash zoom, which we programmed onto a electronic Canon zoom lens. Making matters more difficult, we used smoke bombs for the last four takes, which added an eerie fog across the clearing. In the end, our final take proved to be stunning, and we wrapped our Fontainebleau State Park location. Beers followed.

Day 7

Last day. We shot scenes along the Tammany Trace, a multi-use trail running through St. Tammany Parish. Though hot and humid, it was an upbeat shoot requiring extensive dollying and high-frame-rate recording.

As the crew setup the next scene in my parents' kitchen, the DP, 1st AC and I drove down to madisonville along the Tchefuncte River to seek out the elusive Devil's Horse grasshopper, a large black insect upon which the film is named. With no luck, we gathered some landscape b-roll. However, as we turned around in a parking lot, the Cinema Gods smiled down upon us: a lone Devil's Horse grasshopper walked out of the brush and up to our car. We hopped out and gathered some amazing footage of the grasshopper which has made it into the final cut of the film.

Back at the house, we setup for the kitchen shots, Brad's most emotional scene. We filmed the blending of smoothies, Brad having a breakdown and Brad's father and my mother reacting to Brad's breakdown. After we wrapped, the crew had dinner, enjoyed donated beer and celebrated an amazing shoot. The following day we celebrated further in the New Orleans French Quarter.

POST-PRODUCTION

Back in Austin, my producer Sophia stepped into the role of Assistant Editor when she organized, synched and transcoded all of the footage. Once everything was ready, I stepped in as editor and spent almost everyday of summer working on the film. I first achieved a lengthy assembly of the key takes of each scene. I then began cutting this down into a looser rough cut.

It was during this time also that I hired local composer Nathan Felix to start working on the score. I was a big fan of some of his previous work and had wanted to work with him for years. After meeting and discussing, I knew he was the perfect choice to capture the tone the film needed.

Brad came to visit Austin as I was working on the fine cut, and we spent a long day recording the narration of the film, much of which we rewrote as went along. It was also during this time that we applied for the Moody Innovation Grant, and we were lucky enough to receive all that we asked for. This would help cover most of our post-production, which would mainly include Nathan's fees for the score and our color correction.

Once picture was locked, I was able to work with local post house TBD Post to arrange color correction. But before this, our sound designer Samantha Skinner took the locked picture and cleaned up all the audio and brought the soundtrack alive. Once complete, we went into our final sound mix with Eric Friend who further brought the film alive. Once fully mixed, we took the film to TBD Post where I worked with the colorist to achieve the right look for the film. With a fully edited, mixed and colored film, *Devil's Horse* was ready for submitting to film festivals.

EPILOGUE

*FREAKED THE FEET, MANGLED THE MOUSERS AND
TOTALLED [sic] THE TECHNODROME. THAT'S.. TURTLE
POWER!! BUT, WHAT ABOUT THE SHREDDER AND KRANG...!?
BURNED TO TOAST? VAPORIZED TO MILKSHAKE?? OR...
ESCAPED TO DIMENSION X? UNTIL WE KNOW, NONE OF US
CAN SLEEP SAFELY IN OUR BEDS.. ER, SHELLS!*

— *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Arcade Game*, Nintendo

Entertainment System, Epilogue

I learned a great deal in the process of making *Devil's Horse*.

Primarily, I learned to simply let go. In previous films, particularly *Pervert*, I felt I had to control every aspect of the production. While this brought about an interesting sort of formalism, a kind of coldness I was searching for, it didn't provide the breathing room necessary to get at the true heart of the story. This works well for *Pervert*, but I feel I am ready to dive deeper, and I am happy to have done so in *Devil's Horse*, addressing my own insecurities and existential uncertainties. I still see filmmaking as a

cathartic, therapeutic sort of process. Developing a film without this sort of involvement is, in my opinion, contrived and uninteresting.

APPENDIX A: ORIGINAL SCRIPT

I/E. BRAD'S CAR - DAY [DRIVING]

Towering oaks fly by as a car drives along a secluded road through dense Louisiana forest.

BRAD, in his early thirties, sporting a thick beard and a short-sleeved, collared shirt, coasts through the park's secluded roads, flanked on both sides by jittery oaks and thick brush. He seems to be at peace as he listens to FEEL-GOOD OLDIES on the radio.

A BLUR dashes in front of his car, and before he can slam on the brakes he runs it over with CRASHING THUD.

Brad slams on the brakes and the car SQUEALS to a halt.

I/E. BRAD'S CAR - DAY

The music PLAYS SOFTLY as Brad CATCHES HIS BREATH. He looks in the rearview mirror.

BRAD
You gotta be fucking kidding me.

Something is crumpled up on the road behind him.

INT. BRAD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Golden morning sunlight pours in through the blinds onto a sleeping Brad as he spoons a WOMAN with dark hair. She wears a distinctive red shirt.

BRAD (V.O.)
Dear Lauren, things have been good
these days.

INT. PIZZAZZ HAIR SALON - DAY

Brad gets a haircut from KATHY, a woman in her fifties.

BRAD (V.O.)
I even got a haircut.

Brad's hair leaps from the scissors and floats to the ground.

EXT. TAMMANY TRACE - DAY

Brad jogs along a scenic portion of the Tammany Trace.

The same woman in the red shirt runs ahead of him. She's fit, athletic.

BRAD (V.O.)
I've lost fifteen pounds, if you can
believe that.

Brad keels over and DRY HEAVES. PEOPLE stop and try to help. Brad looks around and the woman is gone.

BRAD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brad rolls over and this time spoons his pillow.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brad sits in a dark living room, lit only by the ominous blue glow of the TV screen, his eyes distant and glazed over. He takes a swig of beer.

BRAD (V.O.)
Been thinking about you a lot.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Brad, sweaty and in his running clothes, tosses a banana into the blender.

BRAD (V.O.)
I'm making those green smoothies you
liked. So freaking good!

Brad throws some kale into the blender.

BRAD (V.O.)
I'm doing a lot better controlling my
emotions. Things are going really well.

His father, AL, walks into the room. Al is in his fifties and has a tremor. Brad pours almond milk into the blender and gazes out the window.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Brad stands in the pool, illuminated by the underwater pool light. He takes a drag of a cigarette and a swig from a beer, staring into the light.

BRAD (V.O.)
But sometimes it feels like I'm on
autopilot. I don't know, without you here,

it's like the bottom's dropped out and
there's nothing to hold onto.

EXT. LAKEFRONT DOCK - DAY

Brad noisily DEVOURS a fried catfish po-boy. He washes it down with a sloppy SWIG from a 24oz bottle of beer.

He sits at a picnic table near a scenic lake.

BRAD (V.O.)
I've been getting out into nature more. I
find the trees and the water all so
soothing.

Brad looks up, chewing. Something in the distance catches his eye.

Out near the water, a FISHERMAN casts his reel into the lake. He's skinny, bald, long grey goatee and covered in tattoos.

Brad takes another bite of his po-boy, watching the man fish.

The fisherman tugs at his line. He turns and meets Brad's gaze.

Brad quickly looks away and takes a swig of his beer. He stares down at the table for a moment before lifting his eyes back up to the fisherman.

EXT. PARK ROAD - DAY

Brad pulls himself out of the car. He takes a glance at the front bumper and turns back to the figure he's hit.

It's a very large animal or person with thick, dark hair.

Brad squints, trying to make out what it is. He WHISTLES at it and CLAPS.

BRAD
Psst! Psst! Hey!

The figure's body slowly lifts and falls, breathing.

Brad walks a bit closer.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Psst! Hey! Hey!

Brad CLAPS as he walks a few steps closer.

It has a pale, hairless lower back.

Brad stops, still unable to make out what it is. His car's music is STILL PLAYING.

The thing breathes with a heavy WHEEZING.

BRAD (CONT'D)
What the...

Brad mulls it over. He turns and goes back to his car. He leans into the car and pops the trunk. He walks around to the trunk and DIGS AROUND. He comes up with his tire iron. He turns back toward the figure.

The figure is gone.

Brad checks around. He walks over to where the body was.

There is a puddle of blood.

Brad stares at the puddle and notices that...

A trail of blood leads off into the woods.

Brad stands up straight and stares into the woods. A twig SNAPS from behind him. Brad flinches and spins around.

TWO GIRLS in their twenties bike past. They look to the puddle and to Brad as they pass.

Brad stares back at them, lost in thought. He turns back to the woods, thinking.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Large oaks tower over lush foliage. Birds CHIRP from the canopy above and frogs MOAN in the distance.

The forest floor CRUNCHES as Brad trudges through the woods. He stops and LIGHTS a cigarette. He looks up at...

A massive oak tree.

Brad pushes through some brush and...

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Brad comes out upon the clearing. He scans the area and spots...

The fisherman from earlier. He kneels over his cooler, adjusting something inside. He looks up at Brad.

FISHERMAN
Hey there, brah!

Brad nods.

BRAD
Hey.

FISHERMAN
Beautiful day we got here, huh?

BRAD
Sure is.

FISHERMAN
Aw, the fish are really biting' out there!

The fisherman fumbles with something in the cooler and punches it. He stands up and LAUGHS, and looks to Brad.

Brad takes a drag of his cigarette and looks around.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Say, brah, ya got another one of those smokes?

BRAD
Sure, yea, no problem.

Brad takes out a cigarette and hands it to him.

FISHERMAN
Ya got a light?

Brad tries to hand him the lighter but the fisherman puts the smoke in his mouth, waiting for him to light it.

Brad reluctantly lights his cigarette for him.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Thanks, friend.

They both look out over the clearing.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Ya out for a little hike?

BRAD
Sort of.

The fisherman notices the tire iron in Brad's hand.

FISHERMAN
Aw that's nice. Good to get out in nature
once in a while. Nice to get away from
the office, right?

The fisherman LAUGHS.

Brad LAUGHS a bit too.

BRAD
Yea.

FISHERMAN
Yea, I love it out here.

Something RUSTLES in the brush nearby.

Brad tenses up, and they both look to see what it is.

A woman, RICHELLE, in her thirties, wearing the same red shirt, trudges
into the clearing carrying the fishing poles and a very big beer.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Ah! There she is! Been waitin' on ya.

She walks over to the cooler and drops the poles. She takes a LOUD
SLURP of beer and stares at Brad.

The fisherman turns to Brad.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Say, brah, I didn't catch your name.

BRAD
Yea, I'm Brad.

FISHERMAN
Okay, Brad, call me Rob. This is
Richelle.

BRAD
Hey.

FISHERMAN

Baby, Brad's out for a hike, just takin' it all in, the trees, the birds, man, it's a beautiful thing, all of it. Am I right?

Richelle is uninterested. She takes a SWIG of beer.

Brad LAUGHS.

BRAD

Yea, of course.

FISHERMAN

I wish I had some beer in the cooler, man, I do. We'd all have a cold one on account of our surroundings.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Brad puts the lid on the blender.

He flips on the blender, which revs up with a LOUD WHIR.

We SLOWLY PUSH IN to the blender as the ingredients begin to coalesce into a green liquid.

BRAD (V.O.)

As great as things have been for me lately, I feel like I could snap. Like all this pressure is gonna make me explode.

We SLOWLY PUSH IN to Brad as he watches the blender, transfixed by it.

Brad FLIPS off the blender, which quickly WHIRS to a halt.

BRAD (V.O.)

So it goes.

Brad searches in the cupboards for something.

BRAD

Has anyone seen my smoothie cup?

Al gathers the trash bag in the wastebasket.

Brad checks another cupboard.

BRAD (CONT'D)
I can't find my smoothie cup.

Brad checks the dishwasher.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Goddammit, where's my smoothie cup?
Has anyone seen my smoothie cup?

Brad checks the cupboard again, KNOCKING plastic cups to the ground.

Al looks up from the trash, startled.

Brad SMACKS the counter.

BRAD (CONT'D)
MOTHERFUCKER! WHERE THE FUCK
IS MY FUCKING SMOOTHIE CUP!

Brad's mom, Kathy, TROTS into the kitchen, the same woman who'd given him the haircut. She stares at Brad, concerned.

Al also looks on with worry.

Brad's keeps his eyes closed, BREATHING HEAVILY.

BRAD (V.O.)
I miss you so much. I'm so sorry about
everything.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Brad emerges from the brush to a wide open clearing dotted with ancient, towering oaks draped in billowing moss. He takes in the scene.
FOOTSTEPS in the distance.

A figure disappears behind a large ancient oak.

BRAD (V.O.)
I just can't seem to make heads or tails
out of anything. Why did this happen?
Why do these things always happen to
me?

We TRACK with Brad as he PLODS toward the oak. He approaches the tree, peeks around it, but there's nothing there. He turns and walks back.

The figure BURSTS from behind the tree and engulfs Brad with its outstretched arms.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Brad and the fisherman LAUGH together over something. Brad flicks his cigarette to the ground and rubs it out with his foot.

FISHERMAN

Ah no, brah, I'll get that, throw it in the trash.

BRAD

Oh shit, yea, you're right.

The fisherman picks up the butt.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Sorry, thanks.

FISHERMAN

No worries, brah.

The sun comes out from behind a cloud, sending patches of light across the fisherman and Richelle. The fisherman and Richelle lift their faces to the sun.

Brad watches, perplexed.

BRAD

Guess I should've brought my sunscreen.

The fisherman gives him a dead serious gaze.

FISHERMAN (O.S.)

Mind if we get your wallet there, friend?

Brad turns back to the fisherman and smirks.

BRAD

I'm sorry?

FISHERMAN

The one in your back pocket.

BRAD
This a joke?

The fisherman savors the cigarette.

BRAD (CONT'D)
I gotta get going.

Brad walks away, and Richelle snatches his tire iron.

Brad spins around.

She glares at him and takes a GULP of her beer.

FISHERMAN
Come on, brah.

Brad eyes them up.

Richelle glares at him, clutching the tire iron.

Brad watches in disbelief. He pulls out his wallet.

BRAD
Fine. Whatever. I'll just cancel my cards.

FISHERMAN
Fine by us.

Brad tosses his wallet at the fisherman's feet.

BRAD
Fucking freaks.

Brad trudges off, his keys JANGLING in his pocket.

FISHERMAN
Friend!

Brad stops, takes a DEEP BREATH, and responds without turning around.

BRAD
What?

FISHERMAN
Car keys, brah. Those too.

BRAD
You gotta be fucking kidding me.

Brad stews in this for a moment.

The fisherman takes a long drag of the cigarette.

FISHERMAN

Car. Keys.

Brad looks around.

They're alone in this clearing, just the three of them.

BRAD

I don't understand why you're doing this.

The fisherman shrugs.

Brad calmly walks away. He breaks into a run.

Richelle snatches Brad by the hair and pulls him to the ground with a THUD.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Ah! Get off of me! Someone help!

The fisherman takes a drag from his smoke.

Brad starts to CRY.

The fisherman and Richelle look down on him.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I don't think I can handle this.

Brad SNIFFLES.

FISHERMAN

Those keys, brah...

Brad shakes his head.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

That's too bad.

Richelle BEATS THE SHIT OUT OF BRAD.

CUT TO
BLACK:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

The sky turns red as the sun prepares to set.

Brad is a lump on the forest floor. Golden sunlight pours in through the canopy and illuminates Brad in a hyper-real glow.

Brad, covered in dirt and beaten to a pulp, wakes up. He GROANS as he turns over. He checks his pocket for his keys.

BRAD

Goddammit.

He turns onto his back and stares above.

BRAD (V.O.)

It's so hard not to just give up on it all.
It's just one thing after another. I can't
figure out what keeps people going.

The branches of the oaks sway in the WIND.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Brad LIMPS through a narrow trail. Seagulls CALL from above.

EXT. REEDS - DAY

Brad HOBBLER through tall weeds. Seagulls SQUEAL from an ever closer distance.

EXT. LAKE BEACH - DAY

Brad hobbles out from the reeds and onto a sandy beach by a large lake. Cypress roots crawl along the sandbar. He shuffles to the water and SPLASHES his face. He sits for a moment and falls back onto the sand.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Man, you look like shit.

A bearded, dark-haired fisherman sits on the Cypress roots. He smokes a cigarette and has a pack of beer next to him. He takes a SWIG.

BRAD
I feel like shit.

DARK-HAIRED FISHERMAN
You want a beer?

BRAD
YES PLEASE.

The fisherman tosses Brad a beer. Brad CRACKS it open and takes a LONG GULP and BURPS. They both look out at the water. The fisherman starts to tug on his line.

DARK-HAIRED FISHERMAN
Ooop, got one!

He pulls up his line and there's nothing on it, not even a hook. He dips it back into the water.

Brad watches him.

BRAD
You getting any bites today?

DARK-HAIRED FISHERMAN
Nope.

BRAD
That's too bad.

DARK-HAIRED FISHERMAN
Nah, I like it out here.

Brad nods. He downs the rest of the beer.

The fisherman has another one for him

DARK-HAIRED FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Here, have another, friend.

BRAD
Aw, thanks, buddy.

Brad CRACKS it open. He looks out upon the lake as the sun sets.

Both he and the dark-haired fisherman take it all in. The beast figure walks through the reeds behind them.

BRAD (V.O.)
But I caught a glimpse of something
today. I wish I could tell you all about it.
Love, Bradley.

We drift out into the water. The same red shirt floats past. We float toward
the sunset.

APPENDIX B: SHOTLIST

SCENE	SHOT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	TIME EST.		
1	A	CU	Brad driving, profile or 3/4 back, driving		1.25		
1	B	POV	Through back windshield, see creature carcass		0.75		
1	C	INS	Trees passing		0.5		
2	A	CU	Brad in driver's seat, car stopped, profile or 3/4 back, smoke effect	Same angle as 1A, smoke effect	0.5		
2	B	POV	Through back windshield, see creature carcass. Brad walks into shot, zoom TO frame out windshield	same as 1B	0.5	3.5	
3	A	WS	Brad lying in bed		0.5		
4	A	WS	Brad in hair parlor	DOLLY	1.5		
4	B	ECU	Hair clipping	over crank; DOLLY	0.75		
4	C	MCU	track across smiling faces	dolly w/ track	1		
5	A	WS	Full shot Brad, full scene up to keeling over, camera keeps moving	camera on back of car or steadicam or DOLLY	1		
5	B	CU	CU Brad, same coverage		1		
5	C	WS	Full shot wife, matching composition of 5A	camera on back of car or steadicam or DOLLY	0.75		
5	D	CU	CU Wife, matching 5B		0.75		
5	E	WS	brad keeling over	camera on back of car or steadicam or DOLLY, same as 5A, not moving	0.75		
6	A	WS to CU	Same as 3A but w/ lighting change, PD change, swwooping push in	DOLLY	1		
7	A	CU to WS	Pull out from blender matching 6A	DOLLY	1		
7.1	A		Bar Scene Dolly PUSH IN	Bar Scene Dolly	1		
8	A	CU to WS	Pull out from blender	could be two shots; DOLLY	1		
9	A	WS	push in to brad in pool	DOLLY (maybe)	1		
9	B	INS	Trees, or back of brad's head	DOLLY (maybe)	1		
10	A	WS	Brad 3/4		1		
10	B	WS	Fisherman 3/4, matching 10A, done with zoom variation?	canon zoom	1		
10	C	CU	Brad w/ ECU variation		1		
10	D	CU	Fisherman		1		
11	A	WS	looking past car, Brad looks at carcass	Could be cut	0.75		
11	B	CU	Brad, looking at carcass		0.75		
11	C	WS	trunk open, brad		0.75		
11	D	POV	Brad's POV of girls passing, long shot w/ pan	over crank	1.25		
11	E	POV	Girl's POV of Brad, w/ pan	DOLLY *establishes layout of scene	1.25		
11	F	CU	Brad at end		0.5		
11	G	POV	absence of carcass and blood trail		0.5	5.75	
12	A	CU	CU Brad, front or 3/4, camera moves w/ brad	handheld	0.75		
12	B	POV	Trees		0.5		
12	C	WS	Brad walking in wilderness		1		
12	D	MS	Brad walking in wilderness		1		
13	A	WS	Brad entering clearing, long lens		0.5		
13/16	B	WS	Fisherman, pull back as F approaches, reveal brad to becom two shot of F&B, pan left to see R enter, pan back to resume F&B conversation, pull back w/ Brad as he leaves, Richelle grabs tire iron, Brad Turns, camera becoems OTS of Richelle, continues dollying when Brad trudges away, Brad is attacked and falls out of frame	lighting gag	1		DOLLY
13/16	C	MS	Two shot, Brad and fisherman (matches beginning of 13B)	lighting gag	1		
13/16	D	CU	Brad, punch in from 13/16 C	lighting gag	0.75		
13/16	E	CU	Brad's POV of Richelle entering, fullshot	lighting gag	0.5		
13/16	F	CU	Fisherman, becomes two shot F&R when R enters, covers until end of scene, covers sunlight change	lighting gag	0.5		
16	G	CU	Brad, new closeup after Richelle takes tire iron (reverse of end of 13/16B)	post sunlight change	0.75		
16	H	MCU	Low angle, on brad after he's been pulled to ground	post sunlight change	0.75		
16	J	MS	low angle, on F& R after attack, looking down on him, brad is dirty earlier on, but gets pushed out of frame	post sunlight change	0.75		
16	K*	EC	Fisherman smoking	post sunlight change			
16	L*	INS	tire iron	post sunlight change	0.5		
16	M	WS	Extreme wide master shot of whole scene	lighting gag	0.75		
14	A	ECU	finger switching blender on/ off		0.5		
14	B	WS to CU	push in to blender	or zoom	0.75		
14	C	WS to CU	push in to brad	or zoom	0.75		
14	D	MCU	3/4 back of brad at cabinet, dishwasher		0.75		
14	E	MCU	Al, becomes two shot of Al and Kathy,		0.75		
15	A	WS to CU	track with brad into clearing, fast zoom into rugaroo when he appears	Needs to be pre-set	1.5		
17	A	INS	Sunset, location		0.5		
17	B	WS	Brad		0.75		
17	C	CU	brad		0.75		

APPENDIX C: SHOOTING SCHEDULE

Pages	Scene		Time of Day	Location	Description	Character	Notes	Special Equipment	# of Set Ups
SCOUTING									
End of Shooting Day 1-Monday 7/6 - Skeleton Crew									
2/8	4	INT	Day	Hair Salon	Brad gets a haircut	1,8		Dolly	2
2/8	3	INT	Day	Brad's Bedroom	Brad sleeps with his ex	1,5		Mombo combo	1
1/8	6	INT	Day	Bedroom	Brad in bed without ex	1		Mombo combo, Dolly	1
Bar - Inserts									
2/8	7	INT	Night	Living Room	Brad drinks beer and watches TV	1		Dolly	1
2/8	9	EXT	Night	Backyard	Brad drinks and smokes by the pool	1		Dolly	2
End of Shooting Day 2-Tuesday 7/7 - Skeleton Crew									
2/8	12	EXT	Day	Woods	Brad trudges through woods after the Rougarou	1		Geny	4
4/8	10	EXT	Day	Lakefront Dock	Brad eats a sandwich and spots the Fisherman	1,3		Geny	4
End of Shooting Day 3-Wednesday 7/8									
2 3/8	13	EXT	Day	Forest Clearing	Brad meets the 1st fisherman and his girlfriend	1,3,4		Dolly, Geny, Extra track	16
2 6/8	16	EXT	Day	Forest Clearing	Brad gets robbed by the fisherman and his girlfriend	1,3,4	Make up	Geny	
End of Shooting Day 4-Thursday 7/9									
4/8	17	EXT	Day	Forest Clearing	Brad wakes up after getting jumped	1	Make up	Geny	4
1/8	18	EXT	Day	Woods	Brad limps through the woods	1	Make up	Geny	1
1/8	19	EXT	Day	Reeds	Brad hobbles through the reeds	1	Make up	Geny	1
1 3/8	20	EXT	Day	Lake Beach	Brad finds peace on the lakefront with the 2nd fisherman	1,6	Make up, Twilight	Dolly, Geny	6
End of Shooting Day 5-Friday 7/10									
3/8	15	EXT	Day	Forest Clearing	Brad approaches the Rougarou and is consumed	1,2	Make up	Geny, Extra track	1
3/8	1	I/E	Day	Brad's Car	Brad drives and hits something	1,2	Make up	Car Mount, Geny	3
2/8	2	I/E	Day	Brad's Car	Brad composes himself in the car	1,2	Make up	Car Mount, Geny	2
1 1/8	11	EXT	Day	Park Road	Brad checks out what he hit, 2 girls bike past	1,2	Make up	Dolly, Geny	7
End of Shooting Day 6-Saturday 7/11									
2/8	5	EXT	Day	Tammany Trace	Brad jogs along the running trail	1,5		Dolly, Geny (could get by)	3
3/8	8	INT	Day	Kitchen	Brad preps a smoothie after his run	1,7		Dolly	1
1 2/8	14	INT	Day	Kitchen	Brad blends up the smoothie and freaks out	1,7,8			5
End of Shooting Day 7-Sunday 7/12									

APPENDIX D: CAST AND CREW CREDITS

Cast

Brad - Bradley Creel

Rob the Fisherman - Rob Leger

Chris the Fisherman - Chris Zweifel

Richelle - Richelle Ringer

Rougarou - John Singer

Sue - Susan Roberson

Al - Al Creel

Karen - Taylor Briggs

Helpful Cyclist - Jeffrey Roberson

Girls on Bikes - Holly Roberson & Heather Roberson

Hair Stylist 1 - Lisa Ahloy

Hair Stylist 2 - Sonny Kerlec

Salon Patron 1 - Sophia Yu

Salon Patron 2 - Amanda Gotera

Salon Patron 3 - Taylor Briggs

Crew

Writer, Director, Editor

Michael Roberson

Producer

Sophia Yu

Executive Producers

Jeffrey Roberson

Susan Roberson

Kyongmee Kim

Director of Photography

Tom Rosenberg

Production Designer
Amanda Gotera

Co-Editor
Qian Zhuang

Assistant Producer
Morgyn Utzman

Associate Producers
Craig Chapman
Leilani Steffan
Jim Mott
Lauren Claunch
Andrea Ewalefo
Stephanie Hough
Jon Theriot
Anthony Pedone
Holly Roberson
Jason Young
Peggy Schott
Richard Ortiz
Jacques Colimon
Barbara Galos

Wardrobe
Amanda Gotera

Creature Effects
Jason Vines

Composer
Nathan Felix

Assistant Director
Mark Blumberg

Gaffer

Jim Hickcox

Key Grip

Gavin Cantrell

1st Assistant Camera

Ivy Chiu

2nd Assistant Camera

Eloise Santa Maria

DIT

Sophia Yu

Location Sound Mixer

Nikki Dengel

Make-Up Artist

Sarah Hains

Set Photographers

Gavin Cantrell

Ivy Chiu

Production Assistants

Holly Roberson

Heather Roberson

Story Consultant

Beth Sarno

Visual Effects

Amanda Gotera

Assistant Editor
Sophia Yu

DI Producer
Irene Yardley

DI Colorist
Cory Berendzen

Sound Designer
Samantha Skinner

Post Production Sound Mixer
Eric Friend

Catering
Susan Roberson
Cindy Creel
Holly Roberson
Sophia Yu

Kickstarter Campaign Manager
Justin Wiemer

Titles and Publicity Art
Mario Garza

VITA

Michael Roberson is a filmmaker whose short films as director and producer have screened in festivals around the world. He's recently completed his Louisiana-based short, DEVIL'S HORSE, and is currently outlining his first feature. He is presently based in Austin, earning his M.F.A. in Film Production at the University of Texas.

Email address: robersonfilm@gmail.com

Website: robersonfilm.com

This report was typed by the author.